

'An Angel on Earth'

For more than 35 years, she graced the halls of Life Care Center of Cleveland – a radiant smile on her face and a twinkle of prankishness in her eyes – encouraging fellow residents and greeting guests.

That light of love and friendship is gone now, for Dora Long, 78, passed away on Monday, Oct. 1, and our world is a little sadder for it.

Although mentally challenged, Dora was “pure in heart,” said Vicki Hood, division director of business development for Life Care’s Eastern Division, one of her best friends, and an associate of the facility for most of Long’s 35 years there.



“An angel on earth” is the way she was described by Cathy Howe, the executive director of Life Care Center of Cleveland.

Dora Long grew up in Copperhill, Tennessee, and had no formal schooling; because of her condition, her mother would not allow her to go to school. The education she acquired was self-taught, along with help others gave her.

She was admitted to Life Care Center of Cleveland on July 31, 1981. Almost immediately, she became a familiar face among the residents, befriending nearly everyone who came to live at the facility across the years. She always greeted guests at the door with a smile as bright as her favorite collection of long, brilliantly colored socks.

If you ever visited Life Care Center of Cleveland and you were back again, and for some reason you didn’t see Dora immediately, either consciously or subconsciously it would seem as if something wasn’t just right.

There was a happiness that beamed from her, and her delight was telling jokes. She was happy to the end of her life “and laughed all the way to the time of her passing,” Howe related.

Dora was one of those rare individuals with a spirit that brightened anyone’s day. She loved children and enjoyed joining them to play with dolls or in the reading of a children’s book. She was a little eccentric – childlike in a lot of ways – with a mischievous streak, Hood said. If confronted with an act of playful misbehavior, she would readily admit it: “Yes, I did it, and I’m sorry.”

(more)

Vicki Hood said that when her mom was admitted to the nursing center, Dora promised, "I'll look after your mother and be sure she is OK." That was the kind of heart Dora had.

"Dora had a great love for Christ," Howe observed, and it drove her to love everybody.

One day, Dora shared with Hood that she had a dream. "Jesus the Lord came into my room during the night, and He told me to be good."

It is not surprising to me that Jesus would appear to Dora Long – a woman who loved Him and unabashedly gave Him praise – and that He would deliver such a message.

We can learn a lot from Dora, primarily (1) love Jesus, (2) love others and show it, and (3) be good.

That's the legacy she leaves. And it would do us all well to emulate it.

Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God, and whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love does not know God, because God is love (1 John 4:7-8 ESV).

– Beecher Hunter